



July 24, 2002

# NLC Journal

*“The interpretation and education programs of the National Park Service are designed to provide multiple opportunities for the public to make connections between their personal interests and the meanings found in parks. We are not concerned merely with the fact that many things may be large or wide or deep or have an interesting evolutionary development. From the point of view of the public, we are interested in the parks meanings to them in terms of their most fundamental thinking and their significance in relationship to their everyday lives.”*

—National Park Service Interpretive Development Program

Director Fran Mainella convened an expanded National Leadership Council in Washington D.C., on June 19-21, welcoming new members, Teresa Chambers, Chief of the United States Park Police, and Bruce Sheaffer, National Park Service Comptroller. The Director said the Chief and Comptroller play critical roles in the life of the National Park Service and will contribute to the work of the NLC. She observed that this meeting was the last for Pacific West Regional Director John Reynolds who is retiring in August, and she praised Reynolds for a distinguished career.

The Director reported on the status of security preparations for July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations in the parks and on the challenge to the Park Service and other land management agencies of this summer’s dangerous fire season. She thanked NLC members for their support and guidance during her first year as Director, and expressed tremendous pride in all of *you*, the employees of the National Park Service, who she described as a central source of strength for this great organization.

The main business before the NLC was to refine proposed adjustments to the Washington Office programs; agree to goals and a strategy to strengthen and focus the NPS education program; and continue shaping a plan of action to guide NLC work.

The National Leadership Council (NLC) is a forum to unify the National Park Service and to provide consultation and strategic leadership on major policy and program issues.

## Adjusting Washington Office Program Portfolios

The NLC discussed at length proposed changes in the Washington Office leadership portfolios and recommended to the Director the following modifications (for a narrative elaboration see the report posted on *InsideNPS* at [inside.nps.gov/headline.cfm?type=Announcements&id=481](http://inside.nps.gov/headline.cfm?type=Announcements&id=481)).

### Education and Interpretation

- Education and interpretation, as a critical mission function, be elevated within the organization. Consider it as an Associate Directorship, if acceptable to the Department and the Congress;
- An interdisciplinary education council, to include SES superintendents and the Manager, Harpers Ferry Center, and the Chief of Interpretation, be convened to recommend how the education function might be structured and managed;
- Cooperating associations report to the same Associate Director as interpretation and education.

### Resource and Visitor Protection

- The Associate Director position identified previously as “Protection and Emergency Services” be entitled either “Associate Director” or “Chief” “Resource and Visitor Protection.” The occupant of this position would be the Chief Ranger of the NPS. The NLC also recommended, and the Director agreed, that special park uses would report to the occupant

- **National Leadership Council**
- **Fran Mainella**
  - Director
- **Randy Jones**
  - Deputy Director
- **Donald W. (Don) Murphy**
  - Deputy Director
- **Bill Walters**
  - Associate to the Director
- **Sue Masica**
  - Associate Director
  - Administration
- **Bruce Sheaffer**
  - Comptroller
- **Teresa Chambers**
  - Chief
  - United States Park Police
- **Katherine (Kate) Stevenson**
  - Associate Director
  - Cultural Resource
  - Stewardship
  - and Partnerships
- **Michael (Mike) Soukup**
  - Associate Director
  - Natural Resources
  - Stewardship and Science
- **Richard (Dick) Ring**
  - Associate Director
  - Park Operations and
  - Education
- **Robert L. (Rob) Aramberger**
  - Regional Director
  - Alaska
- **Karen P. Wade**
  - Regional Director
  - Intermountain
- **William (Bill) Schenk**
  - Regional Director
  - Midwest
- **Terry R. Carlstrom**
  - Regional Director
  - National Capital
- **Marie Rust**
  - Regional Director
  - Northeast
- **John J. Reynolds**
  - Regional Director
  - Pacific West
- **Jerry Belson**
  - Regional Director
  - Southeast
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- of this post, not the Chief, Office of Policy, as proposed earlier. Similarly, the occupant, not the Associate for Administration, Business Practices & Workforce Development, would have responsibility for the uniform program.
- The wilderness use management function report to the Associate Director/Chief, Resource and Visitor Protection; wilderness science to the Associate Director for Natural Resources and Science; and wilderness planning to the Associate Director for Park Planning, Facilities and Lands.
  - Deputy Director Murphy provide oversight over all functions reporting to the Associate Director/Chief, Resource and Visitor Protection, with the exception of Wildland Fire, over which Deputy Director Jones would have oversight.

#### Underground Railroad

- The Underground Railroad, being a nationwide endeavor, have (1) a policy lead in WASO, reporting to the Associate Director for Cultural Resources, Interpretation and Education, and (2) operational personnel in the Midwest Region.

#### Heritage Areas

- Heritage areas report to the Associate Director for Cultural Resources, Interpretation and Education, rather than the Associate Director for Partnerships, Volunteers and Outdoor Recreation.

#### Acting on the President's Management Reform Agenda

Associate Director Sue Masica reported that competitive sourcing continues to be a major reform emphasis in the Department, and an NPS team of employees and consultants is at work meeting initiative requirements and identifying strategies for next steps. The main goal in competitive sourcing is to assure that the work of government is performed in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. The intended objective is that agencies will compete with private industry for 15% of the work presently performed by occupations defined by the Office of Personnel Management as "commercial." In reviewing the NPS approach to the initiative,

Director Mainella stated that the National Park Service is firmly committed to its employees, who she reiterated are the organization's most important asset.

Associate Director Masica said that immediate next steps include hiring consultant expertise and scheduling cost comparison contracts for areas to be studied. The list of potential study areas was developed in consultation with the Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and includes five major occupational groups: administration, architects/engineers, archeology, natural resource occupations and maintenance. The number of full-time equivalent employees being studied was based on a prorated share of each of the five occupational groups per region/center, and mathematically calculated based on OMB's 15% directive. In identifying the respective numbers, each region determined which parks/areas would be included.

The competition process will include the following steps: (1) teams of consultants and NPS personnel will evaluate what it takes to perform given functions, and prepare statements of work; (2) contracts will be issued to secure private sector bids on the work to be done; (3) the NPS will formulate its own estimate of costs to do the work; (4) and determinations will be made of the lowest most cost efficient way to accomplish the work, either by the NPS or outside contractor. Associate Director Masica said that in order to assure success in winning the competitions, the NPS must have the most efficient organization possible. Currently, the Park Service is working with the Department and the Congress to reprogram funds needed to write contracts for consultant assistance. It is hoped that several studies can be underway prior to the end of fiscal year 2002.

Associate Director Masica encouraged employees to learn more about the competitive sourcing initiative by consulting InsideNPS, where information, including the list of potential studies for the remainder of Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003 is posted on *InsideNPS* at [inside.nps.gov/compsource.cfm?area=CO](http://inside.nps.gov/compsource.cfm?area=CO).

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## New Directions in Training and Development

The National Leadership Council welcomed Martha Aikens as the new Chief of Servicewide Training and Development (T&D), whose appointment reflects Director Mainella's commitment to the ongoing professional development of the NPS workforce. Evidence of this priority is the funding obtained this fiscal year to finalize development of an "NPS Fundamentals" curriculum that will be required of all new permanent employees beginning in FY 2003. Additional funding increases for T&D are under consideration as formulation of the FY 2004 budget progresses.

The NLC reviewed work undertaken in support of T&D strategic goals, which were used to define "core businesses" of the training and development community: provide learning opportunities; connect with customers; improve organizational effectiveness; and integrate T&D and Human Resources and Equal Employment processes. T&D will be organized to ensure that the core businesses, goals and mission of the program are accomplished.

### Renewing the NPS Education Mission

The NLC concluded its education seminar series with a look at technology and distance learning, hearing from Dr. Garry Brewer, Professor of Resource Policy and Management, Yale University, and Paul Thomas, Vice President, Education, Discovery Communications, Inc. Earlier seminar topics focused on: place-based education, highlighting the strong connection between place and the learner; learning styles and the need to understand the different ways in which people process information; the challenge of providing meaningful multiple learning experiences; and the need for program evaluation.

The seminars were developed in response to the 2001 report of the National Park System Advisory Board, "Rethinking the National Parks for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" at [www.nps.gov/policy/futurereport.htm](http://www.nps.gov/policy/futurereport.htm). That report gave major emphasis to education, asserting that it is a core function of the Service's mission. It observed that,

while the National Park Service has been in the education business since it was created, management focus has been intermittent and the commitment inconsistent. Declaring that the larger purpose of National Park Service education and interpretation is to advance civic knowledge and invite stewardship, the report offered that the NPS has the potential to contribute significantly to a well-informed citizenry, and it recommended that the National Park Service "develop and expand its educational capacity."

Late last year, the NLC affirmed the Board's recommendation, and planned a series of seminars to increase NLC understanding of current research and practices in the field of education. In conducting the seminars, the NLC was assisted by a region-based working group and the National Park Foundation. NLC members were also interviewed about their aspirations for future education focus.

The NLC reviewed the topics presented at previous seminars and considered results of interviews with members. After much discussion, the NLC developed and agreed to recommend to the Director a draft vision, guiding principles, and three overarching program goals: (1) build educational capacity; (2) guarantee educational opportunities; (3) and strengthen partnerships. Associate Directors Stevenson and Ring were asked to follow-up with park, program and regional personnel before the next NLC meeting to:

- respond to NLC direction
- consider the membership of and charge to the interdisciplinary education council (announced above in the WASO Portfolio discussion) that will report through the Associate Director responsible for education
- develop proposed actions, including a business plan, to carry this effort forward into Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004
- advise on how best to engage more of the Park Service, National Park System Advisory Board, National Park Foundation, and other strategic partners in this discussion
- identify ways to measure progress on education program goals

The results of these discussions will be a princi-

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– President's Management Reform Agenda

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pal focus of work at the National Leadership Council's September meeting at Acadia National Park (a report on the status of the effort will be posted for employees on InsideNPS in August). The meeting will include a joint session with the Board of the National Park Foundation.

NLC members expressed considerable enthusiasm for the education seminar series, saying it inspired thinking about opportunities to engage the public on a significantly broader front. (It was agreed that meeting with outside experts and deliberating on a single issue over the course of several sessions should be a model for future NLC work). Members were impressed anew that educators regard learning in parks as especially powerful; that real places, things and authentic stories offer people a better understanding of history and nature; and that linking classroom experiences to field learning produces positive results. Members were interested to hear throughout the seminar series that the education community would actively welcome a new level of collaborative work with the National Park Service. The NLC believes that, while a network of educational partnerships already exists in parks across the country, opportunities abound to build on this success and establish additional productive, new relationships. It was suggested that the role of strategic partnerships is critical, as they offer connections to new audiences, assist in the delivery of information, and provide valuable input relative to content development in subject areas.

It was observed that the NPS currently is involved in a great volume of activity aimed at encouraging learning, and this includes publication of an array of acclaimed media. In considering how to expand the Service's educational capacity, it is envisioned that the NPS will build on the solid foundation of the Interpretive Development Program ([www.nps.gov/idp/interp/](http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/)) and other education programs. The NLC believes an effective educational strategy starts with a clear understanding of the organization's unique educational strengths, builds stronger links between our education programs and scholarship in the sciences and the humanities, and establishes standards of excellence through "best practices" that we learn and share with each other.

In concluding the session, the National Leadership Council took note that a renewed focus on education is creating excitement in many quarters. It acknowledged and encouraged the Servicewide dialogue about NPS prospects in education, and invited employees to share their ideas and recommendations with colleagues and supervisors.

### Shaping NLC Strategic Directions

The National Leadership Council continued to develop a strategic plan and calendar of actions for itself. NLC three-years goals are to: (1) implement the National Park Service Strategic Plan; (2) implement the National Park System Advisory Board report; (3) and build a seamless national network of parks, historic places and open spaces.

The NLC affirmed that substantial activity is underway Servicewide to meet the goals of the Park Service's Strategic Plan, and it was agreed this work will be reviewed on a routine basis. With respect to the goal of implementing the Advisory Board's report, the NLC identified the following objectives, timelines and responsible members and staff:

- By July 15, 2002, Associate Directors Stevenson and Ring will complete and disseminate to the NLC the proposed education program vision and goals cited above.
- At the September 2002 NLC meeting, Stevenson and Ring, working with the education steering committee, will present recommendations on the structure and charge to the education and interpretation interdisciplinary council.
- By December 31, 2002, Stevenson and Deputy Director Murphy will complete the interdisciplinary council's review and make recommendations to the NLC.
- By the September NLC meeting, Policy Office Chief Loran Fraser will ensure that appointments have been made to the Advisory Board's newly established Education Committee (chaired by Board member Daniel Ritchie, Chancellor, University of Denver).
- By September 15, Fraser will assist the Board in convening its Science Committee, chaired by

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- Dr. Sylvia Earle, Explorer in Residence, National Geographic Society.
- At the September NLC meeting, Regional Directors Rob Arnberger and Karen Wade and Associate Director Stevenson will review a plan to implement recommendations that the Service strengthen relationships with indigenous and local peoples.
  - By December 31, Associate Director Masica and Ring and Regional Director Marie Rust will prepare a draft strategic workforce plan and present it to the NLC.

The NLC reviewed and agreed to further consideration in September of its goal to build a seamless national network of parks, historic

places and open spaces. Other items on the agenda for the next NLC meeting (not already identified above) include:

- To consider a broader context for defining best business practices and competitive sourcing, hearing from Dr. Bruce Hutton, Director, Center for Sustainable Conservation Ethics, and Professor, Department of Marketing, Daniels College of Business, University of Denver.
- To discuss a proposal for a seminar on Outdoor Recreation.
- To review the NPS International Program.
- To determine the frequency, schedule and location of NLC meetings next year.

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## Upcoming Meetings

The next two NLC meeting dates and locales are:

- September 16-17, and September 19 in Bar Harbor, Maine
  - November 19-21, in Reno, Nevada
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## A Personal Reflection on NPS Education and Interpretation

*Deputy Director Don Murphy*

Something wonderful happened at the last National Leadership Council meeting held in Washington, D.C., the week of June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002. After several meetings, during which seminars were held on various topics relating to education, the NLC reached a moment of decision. I believe that decision is a watershed decision for the National Park Service. Though this decision was monumental, it was not the something wonderful.

But first a little bit about the seminars. The seminars were the result of the NLC's response to the National Park System Advisory Board report that challenged the National Park Service to "*embrace its mission as educator, to become a more significant part of America's educational system by providing formal and informal programs for students and learners of all ages inside and outside park boundaries.*" The seminars covered everything from place-based education to learning styles and future technology. I must admit that I was not an enthusiastic supporter in the beginning. The challenge to become a more significant part of America's education system sounded like a challenge to become part of boring academe. The National Park Service had always been exciting, provocative, and inspirational in its interpretive and educational programs; I feared that this may be lost. However, in the executive summary of our attempt at defining the "Interpretation and Education Renaissance," the words that best conveyed the unique nature of our task were: *The primary goal of interpretation and education in the National Park Service is not to fill visitors with information. It is to enable visitors to care.*

I would add that it is not just to care, but to care deeply; to care with wisdom, understanding, and a sense

of responsibility and active participation in preserving and protecting what is the heart and soul of America; its very essence. This cannot be done without a commitment to a renaissance in interpretation and education. The National Leadership Council's watershed decision is to begin the renaissance within the National Park Service. The NLC will begin by appointing a council on interpretation and education that will recommend to the NLC the next steps for strengthening our education and interpretive programs and how to better organize these functions with the NPS. The council will be made up of superintendents, interpreters and educators. The work of the council will be completed by October.

The something wonderful that happened at the NLC meeting transcends even this watershed decision. The National Park Service has become more than a collection of natural and cultural resources; it is more than scenic views; more than historic battlefields, American Icons, even more than places of peace and tranquility. The National Park Service with its vast system of parks and historic sites has evolved to become more than the sum of its parts. It is an institution without equal. In our struggle to understand what this institution has become we searched for a model that could best describe it. We stumbled upon education and the advisory board challenged us to accept that model. But, again something wonderful happened and we discovered that the National Park Service is far more than an educational institution. Education is an important means toward the end of communicating that the National Park System is the soul of America. And that is truly something wonderful.